

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

Stop Night Noise!
Building Neighborhood Capacity and Power:

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Stop Night Noise!
Building Neighborhood Capacity and Power:

Volunteer Research and Campaign Development Project in the
Hale Page Diamond Lake Community Association

by
Cara Letofsky

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NPCR
330 HH Center
301 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455

phone: 612/625-1020
e-mail: npcr@freenet.msp.mn.us

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I. Introduction

The Neighborhoods of Hale, Page, and Diamond Lake

The Hale, Page, and Diamond Lake neighborhoods are located in South Minneapolis. They are bordered on the north by Minnehaha Parkway, the east by Cedar Avenue, the west by Interstate 35W, and the south by the city limits at State Highway 62. The three are united by physical boundaries and homogenous demographics. The communities take pride in the nearby public amenities of Lake Nokomis on the east, the Minnehaha Creek and its miles of pedestrian and bike paths, and its many parks, including Pearl and Todd Park.

The area is overwhelmingly residential, with most of the population living in homes that they own. There is a predominance of children in the neighborhoods, with 31% of the households in the area including children under 18 years old. The area is also predominately white (94% compared to 73% in the city as a whole), and steadily middle and upper-middle class.

Again, although the area is predominately residential, there are a few small commercial nodes that provide basic amenities, such as a grocery store, a drug store, a cleaners and a few small restaurants. The area also houses other community institutions, including eight churches, one private school and one public school.

The residents seem quite pleased with the neighborhood, and many take pride in the fact that it is such a good place to live and raise a family inside the city limits.

Then there's the noise. The neighborhoods lay directly in the flight paths of planes arriving and departing from two parallel runways at the nearby Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP). Planes arrive and depart at all hours of the day and night, oftentimes disrupting the sleep of HPDL residents, and their enjoyment of their homes and neighborhoods.

Hale Page Diamond Lake Community Association

In 1991, the three neighborhoods came together to form the Hale Page Diamond Lake Community Association to facilitate their Neighborhood Revitalization Project planning process. In 1993, after putting in thousands of volunteer hours over 2 years, the NRP Plan was a polished document, and HPDL was committing itself to improving the neighborhood in many exciting ways.

Even at this point, reducing airport noise was identified as a top neighborhood objective. The first objective of the Public Transportation section in the HPDL NRP Plan is "Reduce airport noise." The stated strategy was the "development of incentives for airlines to use quieter planes -- stage III aircraft, sooner and with greater frequency; enforce airport noise restrictions such as night time bans; and support the spread of noise patterns around the metro area."

The Airport Committee and the Stop Night Noise Campaign

The work of the Airport Committee, as a subcommittee of the Transportation Committee, was refocused by the Minnesota State Legislature's decision in the 1996 legislative session to stop the search for a new airport location, thus ensuring that the airport would stay in its current location for the next several decades.

A provision of the state legislation requiring a halt in the "dual track process" required the Metropolitan Airports Commission (the MAC) to establish a new noise mitigation plan for the communities surrounding the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The MAC established a Noise Mitigation Committee, made up of mayors of the municipalities surrounding the airport, to come up with a plan.

HPDL's Airport Committee quickly identified the need to influence this group of mayors. After a series of meetings at which HPDL members brainstormed what they'd like the mayors group to recommend to the MAC, and after these recommendations were voted on and approved through a call-in election, the committee sent a list of recommendations to Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles-Belton. Several of these recommendations were included in Mayor Sayles-Belton's final suggestions to the Noise Mitigation Committee.

In July, 1996, Chauna Brocht, a Community-Organizer-in-training with the Minneapolis Neighborhood Organizing Training Program arrived at HPDL to spend a year working with the neighborhood on issue organizing. One of her first tasks at HPDL was to go doorknocking, talk to residents, and get a sense of what the main issues and concerns in the neighborhood were. Expectedly, airport noise rose to the top of list: of 146 people, 91, (62.3%) identified "airport noise" as one of the things they would like to see improved in the neighborhood.

A series of meetings with community members were held over the next few months, honing the issue campaign and its objectives and goals. By mid-September, the HPDL Airport Committee determined that it would focus specifically on stopping night flights. The committee decided that this was the least divisive, and most unifying issue, and would provide HPDL with opportunities to bring in both neighborhood residents as well as other community organizations in adjacent neighborhoods. Bi-weekly meetings of the Airport Committee were scheduled, and away they went.

The NPCR/CURA Project

The Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization/CURA Project was meant to build the capacity of the organization's volunteers to conduct research to help them develop a grassroots campaign to stop night flights. The Researcher was to help identify what research needed to be done; work with the volunteers to conduct the research, supporting and training them when it was

needed; and present the findings in a clear and simple format, all the while helping them to identify and analyze "alternative actions that may be pursued by the community to deal with this issue."

NPCR's interest in this project was to develop a model of volunteer involvement in the gathering of research, and to build the organization's capacity to run campaigns and win on issues important to them.

The following report is an attempt to develop just that. It begins by going through the chronology of the Stop Night Noise Campaign. I then analyze what strategies to bring volunteers into the research process were used, how successful they were, and the challenges we faced. I conclude by summing up the lessons we learned, and provide some ideas on how to do it better next time.

II. Chronology: What the Airport Committee did when

The Airport Committee of Hale Page Diamond Lake Community Association is a sub-committee of the Transportation Committee. It is made up of a group of about 8 - 15 people who are strongly committed to keeping the neighborhoods a great place to live. It held bi-weekly meetings through the fall, to plan and implement the campaign and to share the results of their research. The following is a chronology of those meetings and events.

Wednesday, September 25th Airport Committee Meeting

The main purpose of this meeting was to "kick off" the airport campaign; and introduce the research component; including assigning the first research projects.

Highlights: I was introduced as the research assistant, and identified as the person that will be helping them do the research they need to do to plan the grassroots campaign. There had been a meeting within the previous week at which key committee members voted to focus the efforts of the campaign on night flights, so this idea was presented to the rest of the group as well.

The question of what steps need to be taken to draw attention to the issue developed into a discussion of what event the group should do. The energy was very high, and people seemed interested in conducting a high visibility, aggressive action targeted at those responsible for creating the night noise.

We started conducting the research by brainstorming "what do we need to know to be successful?" and prioritizing the results; brainstorming "where do we get this information?"; and then signing up people then and there to commit to finding out the information.

Again, the energy was high, and I think most people considered it a successful meeting.

Between meetings:

Several of the committee members who took on short-term research tasks completed those early in the cycle. For the others, I called them six to eight days later to follow-up on their progress. I provided ideas on where people could find the information for those who seemed stuck; I prodded those who seemed to be having a harder time getting going; and I left messages for the others.

Also in this period, Chauna printed up flyers announcing the beginning of the Stop Night Noise Campaign, including the time and location of the next meeting. These were distributed to each of the committee members for them to distribute on their blocks. She and I also distributed some on nearby blocks.

October 9th Airport Committee Meeting

The main focus of this meeting was to report on research, decide on what kind of event to have, and when we should have it. We were going to break into four work groups; two to work on event planning, and the other two to work on research topics of 1) decision making and power relations, and 2) what other cities have done.

Highlights: The meeting became dominated by planning for an event. The group decided that they wanted to affect the MAC meeting on October 28th (anything before was too soon, anything after was too late). Dick Saunders, a committee member presented his idea of everyone going dressed in pajamas and bathrobes as a way to get across the notion of the community's sleep being disrupted by night flights. He believed that this would be a successful way to get publicity for the issue, which would help bring more people in to the campaign. Other committee members thought this would be inappropriate and in the end it was decided to wear conventional clothing, and instead have the "spectacle" be the delivery of a "signed object" (like the canoes in a Boundary Waters action) to the MAC commissioners.

The committee also decided to conduct a postcard campaign, in which postcards addressed to the MAC Chair urging him to support limits on, and penalties for, night flights would be distributed around the neighborhood.

We never got to discuss new research items at this meeting.

Between meetings:

I continued to pull together information, working off of the list we brainstormed at the first meeting with items that committee members added along the way. I worked directly with a couple of volunteers, specifically on developing a fact sheet to distribute at the October 28th event; and continued to follow up with people on tasks they got at the September 25th meeting. I also gathered some articles on what community groups had done in other cities to fight airport issues, and developed a "how-to" sheet, and a list of questions to assist volunteers in contacting them.

Also, the Airport Committee met the following week, on October 15th, to plan for the postcard campaign and the October 28th meeting. They put together two postcard designs, and a plan to distribute them outside of the Jubilee grocery store on 58th and Chicago on the upcoming Saturday. The plan to build and deliver a "signed object" was dropped due to a lack of time.

On Saturday, October 19, Chauna, Gwen Pfiefer, HPDL's Community Organizer, and HPDL volunteers distributed postcards, gathered names of supporters, and collected some funds at the Jubilee. They collected about 100 postcards, almost \$50, and a good list of names of other people in the neighborhood that were interested in getting more involved in the issue. All around a successful action.

Also, Chauna, Jay Clark (Director of the Minneapolis Neighborhood Organizing Training Program), and myself started having weekly meetings to help develop strategies, and determine whether we were being successful at pulling volunteers into the research gathering.

October 23rd Airport Committee Meeting

The main purpose of this meeting was to plan the final details of the October 28th event, including determining what HPDL's demands were; and start research on the decision-making process and power analysis.

Highlights: Kelly Brwon did a great job of presenting the fact sheet we developed, and led a very spirited discussion of what HPDL's demands were. The discussion was mainly around how aggressive to be: does HPDL simply support the mayors' proposal and go for the sure victory, even though it is much weaker than what the committee members would like; or do they ask for what they want: a total, immediate ban on night flights, and give themselves something to fight for. After Shaun Murch, a new member of the committee, spoke the latter proposal was adopted.

At the end of the meeting, most committee members took a city or two to research, with the aid of the background articles and "how-to" sheet and the list of questions.

Between meetings:

The main event was the October 28th action at the MAC's monthly board meeting. The MAC was scheduled to review and vote on the Noise Mitigation Committee's proposal, so there was much interest in the outcome. HPDL turned about 15 people out for it. Volunteers handed out fact sheets with earplugs attached that read "Your own noise mitigation plan", held signs in the meeting, and spoke with the press.

Other interim activities included touching base with volunteers about how it was going with contacting other cities, helping find solutions if they come up against roadblocks, urging them to do it if they were having a hard time getting to it; and pulling together ideas and materials to help volunteers with additional research (this consisted mainly of tracking down information on the MAC commissioners). I also worked to bring in new volunteers in to helping with research who hadn't been to a meeting yet.

November 6th Airport Committee Meeting

The main purpose of this meeting was to evaluate the October 28th meeting; and brainstorm issues of power and decision-making.

Highlights: Helen Merrill reported on what she found out about Atlanta, Chris Wiesemeyer reported on what he found out about the leases, and Wally Hannes reported on what he found out about Louisville.

Jay ran the section on power relations and decision-making, by asking several questions: "Who are our enemies?", "Where are there sources of power?", "How can they stop us?", "Who are our potential allies?", "How to get them as allies?", "Who should we target?"

People then voted that a "new creative action" and "getting in the media" were the best ways to build alliances, and that this next action ought to target the MAC Commissioners.

We also made a list of what else we needed to know before we could determine the longer-term target, and divided up the tasks.

Between meetings:

I accompanied volunteers to various places seeking information: the library, the state Ethical Practices Board, the legislative library. Also, I contacted people who hadn't made it to the meeting to distribute research tasks to them.

SMAAC, the South Metro Airport Action Coalition, held its semi-annual meeting. Steve Cramer, a MAC commissioner and chair of the Noise Mitigation Committee, and Jan De Calzo, former MAC commissioner and aid to Mayor Sayles-Belton on aviation issues were there to talk about the Noise Mitigation Plan that the MAC had just adopted.

November 20th Airport Committee Meeting

The main purpose of this meeting was to report on research and plan the next event, as was decided on at the last meeting.

Highlights: The weather was horrible, and attendance was reduced as a result. When we got to the topic of what the next event was going to be, the discussion developed into whether or not an event was appropriate at this time. The decision was tabled for another time.

Between meetings:

A meeting was held on December 3rd to evaluate the campaign. The committee decided that a grassroots campaign would be more appropriate in the spring when the MAC could be more active on lease negotiations and when neighborhood residents wouldn't be so busy with the holiday season.

The timing coincided with the ending of my appointment, so I spent my time compiling the research that the volunteers and I had already gathered.

III. Strategies and Analysis

This section will go through each of the strategies we implemented to bring volunteers into the work of gathering research to be used in putting together a grassroots campaign to stop night flights. I then analyze each strategy, determining what worked and what did not work about each one.

1. Strategy: Brainstorming at the Airport Committee meeting, and asking people to commit to taking a task. Then following up with them on the phone a week later, half way between meetings.

Analysis: There were three kinds of research tasks that were assigned: Those that needed to be completed right away, because other research tasks depended on that information (such as meeting times and dates); those that were not immediate, but would take a few hours to track down, and could be expected to be found out by the next meeting (i.e., names and addresses of the MAC commissioners); and more long-term research projects that would take a few meeting cycles to complete (such as the health effects of sleep deprivation).

The volunteers that were given the short term tasks delivered promptly, and I was able to then get that information into the hands of the volunteers that needed that first round of information to complete their own research. This worked so well, I argue, because of the immediacy of the task. We worked off of the momentum from the meeting, and that motivated people to complete their assignments. Also, the fact that their research was essential to someone else's work provided another motivation to complete it right away.

All the other volunteers I called between six to eight days after the meeting, to check in with them about how their work was going, provide ideas on where they could find it if they were stuck, or urge them to start if they were having a slower time getting started. Most of the volunteers had thought about their project, and had some ideas of how to accomplish them, but had not yet started.

The call was important to remind people of their commitment and to reinforce the fact that they were to do the research, but I believe it was not as successful as the first group of volunteers for several reasons. One, I was still trying to get a handle on the issue of the airport and airport noise, so many of these conversations had a component of the volunteers informing me of what was going on. This led to volunteers telling me where I could find out the information they were to find out themselves. (One of the challenges we found in this project, as I will expand upon below, was to have the volunteers see me as a resource to assist them in building their skills rather than as a researcher who was supposed to do the work herself.) Two, most of these secondary research projects did not seem as crucial to complete immediately, and thus the volunteers did not have the motivation to complete them right away. Three, volunteers were not as focused on their research tasks as the first group, and several found out information, but not exactly the information we were looking for. I believe this could have been avoided with an earlier phone call

-- perhaps one or two days after the meeting instead of six or seven days after -- that could have clarified what their task was, and talk about strategies to complete them. An earlier call also could have built on the momentum from the meeting and provided some urgency that was lost after a week had passed.

2. Strategy: Call volunteers individually between meetings and ask them to take on a research task.

Analysis: I tried this after the meeting at which we did not get to assigning the next round of research projects. It was a good strategy in that it allowed me to bring in a larger pool of volunteers. As a result of the Jubilee action, we got new names of people that were interested in getting involved, but weren't sure they could make it to the meeting. This was one way to bring those volunteers in and give them something to do without requiring that they come to a meeting for two hours on a weekday night. Also, it was an opportunity to ask a volunteer directly to help -- something that was not always available to do at a committee meeting.

Again, the strategy had mixed results. Volunteers accepted tasks easily. Usually, I then followed up our phone conversation with a memo clarifying what we discussed, and delivered it to their homes with the necessary background information. In general, this method did not activate any new people, but was successful with those committee members who were already invested in the issue and campaign, but maybe missed a meeting at which tasks were handed out. The failure of this strategy to bring in new people can be attributed to a couple of reasons: One, the reasons people have for not being able to make it to a meeting is often the same reason people have for not being able to fulfill commitments to do research: not enough time. Two, people need to have more ownership over the organization and issue before they take on something like research. While I think it was good to at least touch base with potential volunteers who expressed an interest and willingness to help out, a better first connection to the organization is to attend an event or a meeting.

3. Strategy: One person gathers background information, and a volunteer takes the research the next step.

Analysis: This happened in several instances. In one case, I or a volunteer tracked down a document that we wanted to know more about; then it was given to a volunteer to study more closely (i.e., the leases, FAA regulations). This was successful because it broke the research down into smaller, more doable tasks. Instead of giving one volunteer a large, overwhelming topic, this method allowed volunteers to be successful along the way. In most cases, I took the information they reported on and put it into an easily understandable form.

Another case was researching what community groups in other cities had done. To prepare the information for volunteers to take it the next step, I went to the library and gathered articles on other cities that were dealing with airport noise. I focused on articles that mentioned local community groups, or even just a name of someone who was spearheading the fight. I then wrote

a how-to sheet, that included directions on how to use long-distance directory assistance and the questions we wanted to ask about their own campaign, if it was successful, who their target was, etc. At the end of the October 23rd meeting, many of the volunteers took a city to research.

Again, I called people several days after they got their assignments, and helped those who were having troubles, and prodded those who hadn't yet begun. This method had mixed results. People seemed quite pleased with the how-to sheet, as well as the background information that was gathered, but only a small number of the volunteers actually did their research. I believe that this can be attributed to not as much follow-up as was needed to keep people on track with the task.

4. Strategy: Work with volunteers to present the research gathered into an easily understandable form.

Analysis: This worked well on the one occasion we tried it: putting together the fact sheet that was distributed at the October 28th MAC board meeting. A volunteer and I sat down with all the information that the committee had gathered, picked out a few choice bits of information, and determined how to format the final product. The volunteer then presented it at the next Airport Committee meeting, and got feedback from the other committee members. This particular project, though it wasn't actually resulting in new research, was very successful. The decision about what should go on the flyer was made by the members of the committee, with support and input from the staff. The process allowed the staff to work one-on-one with a volunteer, thus building that relationship that is crucial in neighborhood organizing.

There were two instances where the results were less glowing, and they were both victims of timing. I was trying to set up meetings with two other volunteers to develop fact sheets from the research they had done. These meetings had not been set by the time the Airport Committee decided to break for the winter, so I did not pursue the meetings.

5. Strategy: Volunteers accompany the research assistant to the public library, and other places to do the research together.

Analysis: This was a strategy that was implemented towards the end of the project, and was very successful. Preparation needed to be done before it was even possible to bring volunteers along to do the research, but some of the preparation was done by volunteers as well. For example, a volunteer and I made a trip to the Ethical Practices Board. Before this was possible, she needed to find out where the Ethical Practices Board was located. Another example is that several of the trips I took to the library with volunteers was to search the local newspaper's on-line database for articles about the MAC commissioners. The list of the commissioners was found by another volunteer previous to our visits to the library.

This was successful in many ways. One, because my time was flexible, it could be made to fit in with anyone's schedule. Two, volunteers seemed to appreciate the support and the opportunity

to conduct research with someone else. Three, it also provided another opportunity for me to work with one-on-one with a volunteer, and build a relationship with them. Four, it built the research skills of the volunteers, so next time when they want to find out information, they will be more familiar with on-line databases and government agencies. Five, this is one of the few techniques that you can be sure will produce results. Instead of a phone call urging someone to fulfill their commitment to do research, you are there with them seeing it happen.

What strategies worked

1. Brainstorming, so everyone has input and an understanding of what the group needs to know
2. Having volunteers sign-up for tasks at the meeting
3. Asking volunteers to report on what they found out, to ask for some measure of accountability
4. Giving volunteers smaller tasks
5. Checking in with volunteers regularly (should have happened more frequently)
6. Being flexible with my time, so I could repond to the needs of the volunteers
7. Doing the research with the volunteer whenever possible, including getting it in a format that is easily understandable to everyone
8. Making it easy for volunteers to do their assigned task -- by both making tasks small enough, and by providing direction and support when necessary
9. Working off momentum when a meeting or event goes well
10. Ask volunteers directly to help, either in person at a meeting or over the phone
11. Finding opportunities to bring new people in

IV. Challenges

Neighborhood organizing always faces many challenges, only some of which are related to working with volunteers. In this section, I identify several of the ones we faced during this project at the Hale Page Diamond Lake Community Association, most of which are identified with the help of hindsight. The goals of this section are to: 1) provide some background to the specific situation we faced at HPDL; and 2) provide some insight for those who will do this kind of work in the future in any neighborhood.

1. An overwhelming feeling of helplessness.

Many of the people who were involved in the Airport Committee were very skeptical about the possibility of accomplishing anything through a grassroots campaign. This was the result of two things: One, many of them have been battling the airport for years and have seen no results. Two, many were still incredibly disheartened by the State Legislature's decision to keep the airport where it is. It was a challenge to convince the members of the Airport Committee that a grassroots campaign would be successful in limiting night flights.

2. The role of the Research Assistant.

From the beginning of this project, my position was described as working with the volunteers of the organization to help them build their research skills and the capacity of the organization. However, many of the volunteers had the impression that I was supposed to do the research, not work with them do it.

This created a problem when I began calling people to see how their research was going, and several people responded by telling me where I could find the information. It seemed unclear to the members of the committee that my role was to help them figure out how to find information, and to learn how to use new sources of information, like computers, not to do the research myself.

3. How the research fit into campaign development.

An additional challenge was to get people to understand how the information they were gathering was to be used. The idea was that the information we were finding was to help the Airport Committee design a grassroots campaign; develop a timeline; determine who the best target was (who makes the decision, and how to hold them accountable); and develop a message with the information that would bring in more neighborhood volunteers, and build the power of the organization.

Without this understanding, it was a challenge to get the volunteers to think strategically about what information they needed to know. Also, at several points during the project it seemed that people thought just having the information was good enough, and never took it the next step to using that information to design a campaign.

4. Some research was more challenging than a volunteer could do in his or her free time.

It was only late in the project that we came up with the strategy of breaking down the larger research projects into smaller pieces. But it was a challenge to break some down into tasks small enough for volunteers to do and be successful at.

For example, we needed a lawyer to read some of the documents we found; we needed more tasks that people (without internet access) could do from their home; and as the tasks got broken down, we needed more volunteers to do them, so no one person had too much to do.

5. The power of information.

It was challenging to get the volunteers to understand the power of the information they were gathering. Again, the idea was that we would use this information to design a campaign to get the airlines to stop flying at night. Volunteers seemed unwilling to think antagonistically towards the decision makers. This hindered their ability to seek out certain kinds of information, and think strategically about how to use the information we did find.

6. Keeping the goals of the campaign in mind.

It was a challenge to keep the goals of this particular campaign in mind. The recent decision by the State Legislature to end the dual track process and keep the airport where it is was a huge setback for the residents of the Hale Page and Diamond Lake neighborhoods, many of whom spent years advocating for the airport to be moved. Rather than using the information gathered as a tool in putting together a Stop Night Noise campaign, there were many times committee members saw it as further evidence of the need to move the airport. This was the tendency even after the committee voted on what HPDL's demands were.

V. Conclusions

Lessons learned

1. Tried and true organizing methods work.

This project reinforced my belief that the tried and true organizing methods of personal contact, directly asking people to do something, bringing volunteers in bit by bit, and frequently following-up with people, work. The volunteers that I had less contact with were not nearly as likely to finish their research task as were those that I spoke with more often.

2. Personal contact with volunteers is crucial.

The more successful pieces of this project all had one important component: personal contact. The first round of research that the volunteers did was much more likely to get done if I was able to reach the volunteer on the phone. Secondly, the more successful pieces of this project were working one-on-one with a volunteer to develop a fact sheet and accompanying volunteers to do the research -- both due in part to the personal contact component. This allowed me to get to know the volunteer better, learn what motivated them to get involved in the neighborhood group, hear their concerns about the campaign, etc. One thing I learned about one volunteer was her dislike for searching into people's background. She would have felt much more comfortable with a different research task, while she still could have learned how to use on-line databases.

Additionally, while personal contact allowed me to get to know the volunteers, it was also an opportunity for them to get to know me, which also helps in motivating them to fulfill their commitment to do their research.

3. Small research projects are better to ask volunteers to do.

This is probably self-evident, but there are many reasons for it. One, a small task is easier to complete, and therefore is more motivating to give a volunteer. Success is easier to achieve. Two, it is easier to follow-up with volunteers if they have a small task as opposed to one large one. If a task was to take only a day or two to complete, I could call more frequently, and keep more regular contact with the volunteer. Otherwise, if a task was a large, overwhelming one, frequent calls seemed more harassing and less productive.

4. Campaign goals and demands need to be constantly referred to.

We learned how important it is to have everyone on board with the campaigns goals and demands. If the Airport Committee was more focused on the issue of stopping night flights between 10:00 pm and 7:00 am; and including penalties for non-compliance in the upcoming leases (as they voted on), it would have helped the volunteer focus on the research and thinking strategically about the information that was uncovered.

5. Momentum and urgency are important motivations.

Most of the research that was completed quickly was done so because the volunteer was motivated by momentum or urgency: either the research was crucial to complete before someone else could start theirs, or it happened soon after a particularly successful meeting. Without this motivation, it usually took people longer to get themselves to do the research.

An additional motivation was an impending meeting, especially when a volunteer knew he or she would be asked to report to everyone else what they'd found out.

How to do it better next time

1. Make it clear to the volunteers in the organization what the role of the research assistant is. Again, I think many people thought it was Chauna and my job to do the work, as opposed to us being resources to help them build their neighborhood group.

2. Be clear and repetitive about what the goals and demands of the campaign are. Write them on wall charts and display them in the office and at every meeting.

3. Be in contact with volunteers frequently. Again, regular phone calls and updates to volunteers builds the sense of momentum crucial to any successful campaign as well as builds the relationship between the staff and volunteers. Build on the momentum of a successful meeting, and contact volunteers within two days to talk about their task, rather than waiting a week.

4. Find small tasks for volunteers to do, and even smaller ones for new and potential volunteers. Volunteers who were part of the airport committee even before the campaign started were already invested in the group. New volunteers need time to reach that level of investment. This can be done by working to find tasks that fit their capacity, and slowly increasing their involvement.

5 Think about what skills the neighborhood volunteers need to develop, and design the research tasks around them. Specifically I am thinking about how many of the members of the airport committee did not know how to use on-line databases or the internet. We should have developed tasks that would have helped volunteers learn new skills. We only started doing this later in the project.